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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/020,693	12/14/2001	Karla M. Robotti	10981377-4	3398

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AGILENT TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
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EXAMINER	
GORDON, BRIAN R	
ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER

1743

DATE MAILED: 03/17/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/020,693

Applicant(s)

ROBOTTI ET AL.

Examiner

Brian R. Gordon

Art Unit

1743

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 1-13-05.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 37-43 and 46-72 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 56-64 and 66-72 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 37-43, 47, 52, 53 and 65 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 48-51, 54 and 55 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 14 December 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed January 13, 2005 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant states "Burns et al. fail to disclose a phase reversible material that is stably associated with a micro-valve." The examiner disagrees for the meltable material as taught by Burns et al. is not a free flowing material that is capable of being moved at anytime. The meltable material remains in the same position (stably associated) until heat is applied changing the phase of the material from solid to liquid. In the solid phase the material remains lodged in the channel at the position as seen in Figure 10.

As such, the 102 rejection of claims 37-43 is hereby maintained.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

1. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

2. Claim 47 and 65 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claims 47 and 65 recite "said flow paths is substantially filled with said phase reversible material".... It is unclear how the phase reversible material, which is said to be an element of the micro-valve in claims 37 and 57, is subsequently claimed as filling a flow path.

If the same material that comprises the microvalve also fills the flow path, then that means the microvalve occupies the flow path and not just limited to the intersection of the flow paths?

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371(c) of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

The changes made to 35 U.S.C. 102(e) by the American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 (AIPA) and the Intellectual Property and High Technology Technical Amendments Act of 2002 do not apply when the reference is a U.S. patent resulting directly or indirectly from an international application filed before November 29, 2000.

Therefore, the prior art date of the reference is determined under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) prior to the amendment by the AIPA (pre-AIPA 35 U.S.C. 102(e)).

2. Claims 37-43 and 52-53 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Burns et al. 6,048,734.

Burns et al. discloses devices and methods for the sealing of channels in microscale devices with meltable material. In one embodiment, the device comprises a meltable material (phase reversible material) disposed within a substrate and associated with a heating element.

The invention contemplates a method comprising: a) providing a device having a meltable material disposed within a substrate and associated with a heating element; and b) heating said meltable material with said heating element such that said meltable material at least partially liquifies and such that said substrate is not damaged. The method may further comprise c) allowing said liquified meltable material to cool. While the present invention is not limited by the size of the channel, in one embodiment said substrate further comprises a microdroplet channel disposed in said substrate, said meltable material is disposed within said microdroplet channel.

While the present invention is not limited by the nature of the substrate, in one embodiment the substrate comprises silicon or glass. Likewise, the present invention is not limited by the composition of the meltable material. In one embodiment, the meltable material comprises solder. In a preferred embodiment, the solder comprises 40:60 Sn:Pb. In other embodiments, the meltable material is selected from a group consisting of plastic, polymer and wax. Likewise, the present invention is not limited by the placement of the meltable material in the substrate. In another embodiment, the meltable material is placed adjacent to a channel, while in another embodiment it is placed near the junction of more than one channel.

Figure 3 shows the heating element (phase reversing means) outside the channel and Figure 10 shows a portion of the heating element located within the channel.

As to the material being stably associated, the meltable material remains in the same position (stably associated) until heat is applied changing the phase of the

material from solid to liquid. In the solid phase the material remains lodged in the channel at the position as seen in Figure 10.

As to claims 52-53, the specification recites the micro-compartment is merely channel 14. Burns et al. discloses channels.

Allowable Subject Matter

3. Claims 48-51 and 54-55 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

4. Claim 47 and 65 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd paragraph, set forth in this Office action and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

5. Claims 56-64 and 66-72 are allowed.

6. The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: The prior art does not teach nor fairly suggest a phase reversible material that goes from a first permeable state to a second-impermeable state, said material stably associated with a high surface area component, said material being an N-isopropylacrylamide copolymer, polyalkylene oxide.

Conclusion


7. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Brian R. Gordon whose telephone number is 571-272-1258. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, with 2nd and 4th F off.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jill Warden can be reached on 571-272-1267. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


Jill Warden
Supervisory Patent Examiner
Technology Center 1700

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